

OWEN PARK
560 North Maybelle
Tulsa
Tulsa
Oklahoma

HALS OK-21
OK-21

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

OWEN PARK

HALS NO. OK-21

Location: 560 N. Maybelle, Tulsa, Tulsa County County, Oklahoma
Lat: 36.16089 Long: -96.00501

Significance: Owen Park, the first public park in Tulsa, Oklahoma, officially opened on June 8, 1910. Named after Chauncey and Mary Owen, who sold some of their ranch/farm land to the City of Tulsa in 1909, the 24 acre park served as the home of the first Tulsa Park Superintendent. Today, the area that was once undeveloped is surrounded by residential neighborhoods built in the 1920s and 30s. It is part of the Owen Park Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated Oklahoma Landmark. The park is an important part of the history of the early years of the Tulsa.

History: In 1904, five years before the city purchased the land from Chauncey and Mary Owen, a temporary worker for the Western Torpedo Company was transporting goods from a wagon into a building on site that was used to store nitroglycerine. The company used the highly unstable and explosive nitroglycerine to shoot oil wells. The employee was last seen entering the building about 15 minutes before a massive explosion blew the building and all of its contents into a million pieces. The explosion was heard miles away and even broke the glass of buildings located about a mile to the east. All that remained was a large crater and scattered debris. Soon after the explosion the crater filled with water and became a popular swimming hole. Ironically, the site became a popular destination for Tulsa citizens to enjoy food, games, and fireworks on the 4th of July. After the purchase of the property in 1909, Tulsa's first Park Superintendent moved into a house in the park and park board meetings were held in a room above his garage.

Today, Tulsa's oldest park has changed quite a bit from its early days of farm land with scattered trees. The 24 acre property now is home to a play ground, two sporting fields, tennis courts, a water play area, a recreation center, an outdoor basketball court, an indoor gym, and picnic shelters. The large, water-filled crater is named Owen Park Pond. In addition, there are several historic memorials located on site, including the Indian Memorial, the Tulsa Association of Pioneers Memorial, and Tulsa's oldest surviving house. The Indian Memorial pays homage to the Osage, Cherokee, and Creek Indian Nations and marks the spot where the three nations met in 1825 with United States government officials to discuss land appropriations for the tribes, who were being removed from their native lands in the Southeastern states. The Tulsa Association of Pioneers Memorial honors the original members of the Tulsa Association of Pioneers who lived in Indian

Territory in the late 1800s. Tulsa's oldest surviving home, built in the 1880s, was moved to the site in 1976 and is in the National Folk style that was common during the late 19th century.

Sources: "Owen Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, <http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/99001137.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2009).

"Owen Park Historic District," Tulsa Preservation Commission, <http://tulsapreservationcommission.org/nationalregister/districts/owenpark/significance/> (accessed May 2, 2009).

Parks Department, City of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
<http://www.cityoftulsa.org/recreation/parks/> (accessed May 1, 2009).

Historian: Steve Eilers, May 2, 2009
3700 West 19th
Stillwater, OK 74074
steve.eilers@okstate.edu

Dr. Charles Leider
Professor and Director of the Landscape Architecture Program
Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department
360 AG Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078-6027
Office: (405) 744-5420
charles.leider@okstate.edu



View overlooking Owen Park Pond (Steve Eilers, 2009).



View of the open spaces found in Owen Park (Steve Eilers, 2009).